

## John Branch to Andrew Jackson, August 14, 1830, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

### SECRETARY OF THE NAVY (JOHN BRANCH) TO JACKSON.

Washington, August 14, 1830.

*My Dear Sir,* I have several matters of some little importance, which I was about to transmit to you by mail but upon reflection I have determined to permit them to remain untill your return, as the public interest can sustain no detriment thereby and as I presume your mind is occupied with other business of more pressing importance.

One subject I will barely mention. On a partial inspection of the Navy Yard at Norfolk as I was returning from North Carolina I was surprised to find a new Sloop of war almost ready for launching. On enquiry I ascertained that she was put on the stocks in March last, and that she was intended to bear the name and supply the place of the John Adams *reported to the last Session of Congress for repairs*. I am further informed by the Navy Comrs. that they have felt authorised to build this vessel in consequence of instructions, (verbal I presume) which were given by Mr. Southard. I must acknowledge that I have been somewhat embarrassed by this unauthorised expenditure. First because we have not one cent appropriated for *building* new Sloops, And secondly by a reference to legislative enactment it will appear that not even a barge has been built in time of War even without the express direction and sanction of Congress, with the exception of two or three cases under the last Dynasty. I dislike very much to practice such a deception, to do by indirection what we cannot do directly and above board. Again the policy of building new vessels when we already have afloat more then we can *employ, repair or preserve from premature decay* may well be questioned *as in truth it was in your last message to*

## Library of Congress

*Congress*. I have therefore directed that she should be preserved on the stocks untill your opinion can be obtained. If it is the wish of the government to supply the place of those vessels which may be either lost at sea or may be condem[n]ed as the *John Adams* was as being unfit for repair, let them say so and appropriate accordingly. The nation expects economy in the disbursement of the public monies and they have a right to expect, nay *to require* their executive officers to execute the law as they find it written and not as they believe it ought to be written. I have however done in this as I trust I shall in every other case what I believed to be my duty, and solicit most earnestly your counsel. We look forward to your return with unaffected pleasure.

Pray present us in kind terms to Maj and Mrs. Donelson and Miss Mary and accept for yourself our united good wishes and esteem

What will become of Clay after his recent signal discomfiture in Kentucky? No alternative but to be laid on the shelf with his prototype Burr. May such be the fate of all traitors to their Country.